

BUDGET CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ADOPTS ADDITIONAL FEES

The Budget Conference Committee this week adopted a series of civil filing fee increases to help offset state General Fund reductions to the trial courts in the 2003-04 fiscal year. In the aggregate, the new or increased fees will generate an estimated \$82.9 million in annual revenue. The proposal calls for the fee increases to sunset after three years. The fees adopted by the Conference Committee included:

- A new \$100 fee for continuances requested by the parties in civil and family law cases.
- A new complex litigation fee of \$500.
- A doubling of the fee for filing limited jurisdiction cases worth over \$10,000 from \$90 to \$185.
- An increase in summary judgment motion fees from \$100 to \$150.
- New graduated filing fees for probate proceedings for decedents' estates.

The \$82.9 million in revenue is predicated upon 12 full months of collections. To the extent the state budget is not in place by July 1, anticipated revenues will decline for each day, week or month the proposed new fee schedule is not in effect. For example, if this year's budget is not signed until August 1, 30 days after the start of the new fiscal year, the delay will create a \$6.9 million revenue shortfall.

The issue of filing fee revenues reaching anticipated bench marks is very important to the trial courts. After all, the whole purpose of the new fees is to help offset deep cuts imposed on the courts pursuant to the governor's budget proposals. Thus what appears to be a partial fix, in terms of replacing General Fund support, may fall short of the goal if the budget debate drags on well into the summer.

LIMITED EXEMPTION BILL APPROVED BY SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

[AB 1101](#) by Assembly Member [Darrell Steinberg](#), was approved by the Senate Public Safety Committee Tuesday on a unanimous vote. The bill would permit attorneys to reveal client confidences when necessary to prevent the death of or bodily injury to an individual.

The bill has been double-referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will hear it within the next few weeks.

ASSEMBLY MAY CONSIDER REVISING LOBBYIST RULES

An incident on the Assembly Floor in the waning hours of last week's final consideration of house-of-origin bills has prompted Assembly Speaker [Herb Wesson](#) to create a new committee to consider greater restrictions on lobbyist activities.

According to newspaper accounts, one of the Capitol's best-known and highly respected political consultants, Richie Ross, who is also a registered lobbyist for the United Farm Workers and others, engaged in a heated exchange with staff for two Democratic members outside the Assembly chambers, during which he threatened the members' bills if they did not support a UFW-sponsored bill to provide health insurance to farm workers.

When some members complained, Wesson promised Democrats that he would create a "special committee on protocol," headed by Assembly Member [Wilma Chan](#) (D-Alameda). The other members named, all Democrats, are [Darrell Steinberg](#) of Sacramento, [Joe Nation](#) of San Rafael, [Ellen Corbett](#) of San Leandro and [Mark Ridley-Thomas](#) of Los Angeles.

The committee would investigate whether legislation is warranted to prohibit political consultants from working as registered lobbyists.

"OPEN GOVERNMENT" AMENDMENT NOW EXCLUDES LEGISLATURE

[SCA 1](#), Senate President pro Tem [John Burton's](#) measure to expand public access to government information, has been amended to exempt the Legislature from its provisions.

Officials of the [California First Amendment Coalition](#), the sponsors of the measure, were not pleased with the amendment, and even considered withdrawing their support, but ultimately agreed to view the amendments as "final non-negotiable price to pay for having the Legislature place SCA 1 on the ballot for statewide vote next year."

The bill has been approved by two Senate policy committees, and is set for hearing June 16 in the Senate Appropriations Committee.